



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office

P. O. Box 460

Cedarville, CA 96104

www.ca.blm.gov/surprise



August 6, 2009

In Reply Refer To:
4130 (CAN070) P

Notice of Proposed Action and Initiation of Public Scoping Grazing Permit Renewal for the Denio Allotment

Dear Interested Party:

The BLM proposes to reissue the livestock grazing permit for the Denio Allotment. The need for the action is to ensure that future issuance of grazing authorizations are in conformance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision of April 2008, and the Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada, Standards for Rangeland (Land) Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management of July 2000.

The BLM has been directed to renew all grazing permits using the information from the Land health standards determinations or evaluations, and to complete environmental impact analysis (EA). In accordance with that policy, the Surprise Field Office will analyze the environmental impacts of a reasonable of range alternatives, including a no grazing alternative and an alternative to issue a 10 year livestock grazing permit to a qualified applicant on the Denio Allotment. The grazing permit and authorization (including crossing or trailing permits) would state the kind and number of livestock, the period of use, amount of active use in animal unit months (AUMs), grazing management actions, terms and conditions.

All grazing permits are issued in accordance with 43 CFR 4100. Grazing permits must be consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Background Information

The Bureau of Land Management has completed a Land Health assessment and determination for the Denio Allotment. This determination concluded that the standards for soils, biodiversity, and water quality are met, and the standard for riparian/wetland areas was not met. Current livestock use was found to be contributing to the nonattainment of the riparian standard. In accordance with policy, the Bureau of Land Management must modify grazing use to address this non-attainment of Land Health Standard. The determination for the RHA issued on August 4, 2009 and is posted on the Surprise Field Office homepage at http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/surprise/grazing_permit_renewals.html.

Overview of Affected Resources

The Denio Allotment is located in northwestern Washoe County Nevada at T 39- 40 N, R 22 E; the allotment is comprised of 22,700 acres of public land and 1,210 acres private land. Elevation ranges from 5,300 and 6,900 feet and precipitation varies from 8 to 16 inches. See attached Map.

The Denio Allotment is categorized as “I” (Improve) meaning the allotment generally has potential for increasing resource production or producing desired conditions. There may be conflicts or controversy involving resource conditions and uses, but there are realistic opportunities to improve resource conditions.

Grazing Management

The Denio allotment is currently authorized for up to 289 cattle to utilize 1,542 Active AUMs from April 16 to October 15, annually. The current permit was issued under provisions of the Appropriations Act.

The allotment is managed as a two pasture deferred grazing system.

The current grazing system is designed to defer grazing use in the upper pasture until after the growing season or about July 1, each year. April 16 is the expected date for range readiness for the lower pasture and approximate livestock turnout date.

Wilderness Areas

Approximately 6,227 acres of the Little High Rock Canyon Wilderness Area occurs on the eastern side of the allotment. This area is located in the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (NCA).

Cultural

The Denio allotment contains a number of prehistoric and historic cultural resource sites. Several sites may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Wildlife

The allotment contains important wildlife values. Mule deer generally use the higher elevations of the allotment that contain bitterbrush. Pronghorn antelope use the entire allotment. Several BLM sensitive species occur on or adjacent to the allotment including sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit and California bighorn sheep. The diverse landscape and vegetative communities provide habitat for a wide variety of non-game animals.

Wild Horses

The Denio Allotment is not within a Herd Management Area, although currently there are about 40 wild horses using the allotment yearlong.

The Land Health Determination

The rangeland health assessment and determination was completed in 2008 and 2009 for the Denio Allotment. The following table contains the determination results. If an assessment site does not meet a standard, then the standard was considered not met for the entire allotment.

Table 2 Achievement of Rangeland Health Standards - Denio Allotment

Rangeland Health Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Current livestock are a causal factor for not meeting Yes or No	Remarks (locations, etc.)
Upland Soils	✓			Data from the two upland rangeland health assessments rated soil stability and hydrologically as functioning. Transect data collected during the upland health assessments show that the sites have abundant vegetation cover to protect the soil from wind and water impacts. There is no or little indication of soil erosion.
Stream Health			N/A	There are no streams in the allotment.
Riparian/ Wetland		✓	YES	The Standard for Riparian Wetland Areas is not met on several riparian sites. These riparian areas are functional-at-risk with either static or downward trends. These sites are receiving impacts from livestock and wild horses grazing. Mitigation measures are required.
Water Quality	✓			Beneficial Uses and BLM Standards are being met. Neither surface water nor groundwater within the allotment has been listed for exceeding State water quality standards.
Bio-diversity	✓			Rangeland Health Assessment was completed on the two most common upland ecological sites. The shrub community is intact with no large scale disturbances. Upland areas of the allotment have adequate cover and diversity of shrubs and forbs, but are lacking some important grasses on the lower elevations. Based on utilization information this is due to historic grazing practices. Riparian vegetation is mostly protected by exclosures, unprotected sites have a vegetative static trend, and one site had a downward trend.

Request for Input

Your comments need to be submitted to the Surprise Field Office by September 4, 2009. We will use your comments and those received from other interested parties to identify issues and develop alternatives for consideration in the EA. You will receive a copy of the EA and proposed decision when issued. Please provide detailed comments if identifying an alternative for consideration.

Your comments can be submitted to the following address, fax, or e-mail. If you are not interested in receiving additional information related to this proposed action, or would like to be removed from our mailing list, please contact us.

By Mail:
Bureau of Land Management
Surprise Field Office
Attn: Steve Surian
PO Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104

By E-mail: ssurian@ca.blm.gov

By fax: (530) 279-2171

Thank you for participating in this grazing permit renewal process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shane DeForest". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "X" at the end.

Shane DeForest,
Surprise Field Manager

Denio Allotment Map attached,

